



IT University Travel Report

Host University: Future University Hakodate, Japan

University : Exchange Agreement

Exchange Period: Autumn Semester 2018

Courses studied abroad: Information Processing Practice 1, Project Study 3, Special Topics of Interactive Systems 1 + 2

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at [the university] (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

Everything about the university in Japan was really exciting because it was so different compared to studying at ITU in Copenhagen. Me and my fellow study partner from ITU were the first exchange students to visit Future University in Hakodate and that impacted the first month of the visit. We had already some courses pre-approved but needed to change some of those when we got to Japan because some of the courses wasn't available in spite of being stated so in the course catalog. Many things like this were different when we got there, so be prepared for changes and surprises. Regarding the social life at campus: There was a couple other exchange students that we both spend time with and attended classes with. The Japanese were the friendliest people I've ever met.

Unfortunately their english skills wasn't that good so be patient when communicating. That also meant that it's more difficult to get pass superficial and simple questions because of the language barrier. On the other hand it's easy to use the language barrier as a springboard for learning Japanese. Do try to learn hiragana and katakana (two of the three text languages that define Japanese) before you go. DuoLingo is perfect for this.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I always thought about going abroad during my university studies and I could not miss the chance to go to Japan which was possible through ITU. I didn't had any specific expectations because I had no prior experience or knowledge to draw from because I was one of two first students to visit Future University. I read everything in english that I could find about the university and Hokkaido. I tried to prepare as much as I could but even though I did that the exchange was much different than my expectation. I would say that the exchange definitely met and also exceeded my expectations. I have learned so much both professionally and personally.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

In Japan I had the opportunity to define the exchange and the studies at the university a lot. That meant that I could focus on getting better at programming for instance which was one of the main purposes of the trip. In Japan the attitude towards working is a lot different. In practice it meant that the Japanese students worked with bigger projects for longer periods. We had several different courses so we couldn't be as focused on bigger project like the Japanese. Because we had more courses we used a lot of time at the university. The canteen both serves lunch and dinner, so it's easy to stay late at the university for working with projects. We also had a designated office which was available 24/7, so we had all materials and equipment ready at all times. Personally I would say that this exchange changed me a lot. I learned that it's okay to be on your own and that it's important to have the ability to enjoy your own company. I would not have been without this unique experience I would definitely go to Japan a lot in future. It's the most wonderful country and mentality and one you have to experience to understand.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

I applied for the exchange through ITU exchange agreement in February. Then I started to research grants in the spring. In late summer I applied for visa and got the necessary vaccines. Contact your doctor in advance if you need more than one dosis of vaccine.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

I got a lot of help from Eva at ITU which works as an exchange coordinator both before, during and after my stay. I also used legatbogen.dk to plan and systemise my applications for grants. It's a subscription service which is a little expensive but I would say it's worth the money.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

Before I went I contacted the housing organisation UniLife which provides housing in Hakodate. Their website (<https://unilife.co.jp/store/45/>) is in Japanese but you have to translate a lot of websites anyway when you need information during your stay. I contacted them through e-mail and they were very helpful. Be aware that the UniLife apartments have no furniture or fridge. You need to buy or borrow this yourself. I used Amazon quite a lot during the stay because it's cheap and convenient in terms of shipping.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

I payed around 4000 DKK for housing including water and electricity. It's cheap to eat out at restaurants in Hakodate so I did that a lot. Ramen for lunch is not that expensive and there's a lot of places to go all over the city. It's equally expensive to buy groceries in Japan compared to Denmark. There are differences between certain goods but the overall price level is the same. Beware that it cost a lot to set yourself up in the beginning because of bedding, fridge and table for the apartment.

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I applied for the Nordea Foundation

Recommendations for other students:

Start studying Japanese in advance. This will help you a lot and make your exchange more fun. I can also recommend to book: Røde kager og grøn te by Kristian Ditlev Jensen (in Danish) which describe Japanese culture and etiquette in a personal tone and it's an easy read. I also got addicting to going to the onset (hot springs). Especially on Sundays for relaxation, it's the best. And don't hesitate to go. An adventure awaits!